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### **Veteran Pastor Enriched his Ministry with Master of Divinity from Gardner-Webb**

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# Veteran Pastor Enriched his Ministry with Master of Divinity from Gardner-Webb

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Office of University  
Communications

March 9, 2017

## *James Louis Smith '03 has Served the Same Church Nearly 40 years*

The Rev. James Louis Smith '03 of Shelby, N.C., was a 20-year veteran of pastoral ministry when he decided to enroll at Gardner-Webb University. "The School of Divinity was a wonderful blessing in helping me to maximize my potential as a pastor," Smith reflected. "While I was already gaining a lot from the practical side of ministry, I gained so much more in theory as a student. I really treasured my trips to the Holy Land, Greece, and Egypt."

Some of the most memorable lessons for Smith were shared by professor of pastoral studies Dr. Doug Dickens, who was also his adviser. "Pastoral care is the heart of my ministry," Smith observed. "Dr. Dickens shared his personal experiences and offered practical advice in pastoral care. He became a good friend and mentor."

Since completing his master of divinity in pastoral care and counseling, Smith and his wife have celebrated 41 years of marriage. He has served a total of 38 years at Palmer Grove Baptist Church in Kingstown, N.C., the only town in America named for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Organized in 1929, the church membership is over 500 and includes a mixture of young and old individuals.

photo of James Louis Smith

Looking back over his ministry, Smith is grateful for the influence of the professors in the School of Divinity. He was impressed by their genuine concern for the biblical education and spiritual formation of the students. "I gained an even greater knowledge of the Bible and a deeper commitment to Christ, the congregation and the community that I serve," Smith affirmed. "Gardner-Webb, without a doubt, is the greatest educational experience of my life."